

United States District Court

for the
Western District of New York

United States of America

v.

Case No. 24-mj-1062

MATTHEW A. STEELE

Defendant

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the dates listed, in the Western District of New York, the defendant, MATTHEW A. STEELE:

- (1) From in or about July 2011, to in or about July 2012, the exact dates being unknown, did knowingly use, persuade, induce, entice and coerce a minor, that is, Victim 1, to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such sexually explicit conduct, which visual depictions were produced using materials that had been mailed, shipped and transported in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce by any means, including by computer, and which visual depictions were actually transported and transmitted in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce and knowing or having reason to know, such visual depictions would be transported in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce; and
- (2) From in or about July 2011, to on or about January 25, 2023, the exact dates being unknown, did knowingly distribute child pornography, as defined in Title 18, United States Code, Section 2256(8), that had been shipped and transported using any means and facility of interstate and foreign commerce, and that had been shipped and transported in and affecting interstate and foreign commerce by any means, including by computer;

all in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2251(a) and 2252A(a)(2)(A).

This Criminal Complaint is based on these facts:

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

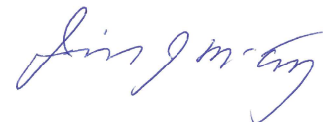

Complainant's signature

William J. Aiello, Special Agent, HSI
Printed name and title

Sworn and subscribed telephonically.

Date: March 11, 2024

City and State: Buffalo, New York



Judge's signature

HON. JEREMIAH J. MCCARTHY, USMJ
Printed name and title

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, William J. Aiello, being duly sworn, depose and say:

1. I have been employed as a Special Agent (“SA”) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations (“HSI”), since 2010, and am currently assigned to Buffalo, New York. Prior to my appointment with HSI, I served as a United States Postal Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service from February 2007 to June 2010. While employed by HSI, I have investigated federal criminal violations related to high technology or cybercrime, child exploitation, and child pornography. I have received training in the area of child pornography and child exploitation, and I have had the opportunity to observe and review numerous examples of child pornography (as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 2256) in all forms of media including computer media. Moreover, I am a federal law enforcement officer who is responsible for investigating crimes involving child exploitation, including violations of 18 U.S.C. §§ 2422 (the online enticement of minors); 2251(a) (production of child pornography); and 2252A (receipt, distribution, and possession of child pornography).

2. I make this affidavit in support of a criminal complaint charging MATTHEW A. STEELE (“STEELE”), with a date of birth in July 1983 with sexual exploitation of a child and distribution of child pornography, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2251(a) and 2252A(a)(2)(A).

3. The statements contained in this affidavit are based on my involvement in this

investigation, as well as information provided to me by other law enforcement officers involved in this investigation, and upon my training and experience. Because this affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of seeking a criminal complaint, I have not included each and every fact known to me concerning this investigation. I have set forth only the facts that I believe are necessary to establish probable cause to believe that STEELE violated Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2251(a) and 2252A(a)(2)(A).

4. On January 25, 2023, the Department of Homeland Security Cyber Crimes Center received a referral from the Queensland Police Service located in Australia, regarding media they had discovered that appeared to be newly produced and unidentified child exploitation material. The media is known in Interpol's International Child Sexual Exploitation database as the child pornography series, "DAUGHTERABBY". Contained within this series are forty-seven images that depict the sexual exploitation of an early pubescent female victim (referred to as "Victim 1"). The images in the series depict Victim 1 both nude and fully clothed. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), as of January 25, 2023, Victim 1 had not yet been identified by law enforcement.

5. On September 12, 2023, a Criminal Analyst ("Analyst") with HSI located in Fairfax, Virginia, performed a visual analysis of the DAUGHTERABBY series. The photographs in the series depict Victim 1 in various areas of a home and in many cases is posing for the camera. Victim 1 has distinct dermatological markings on one side of the face that can be seen in several photos. A few of the photos contain metadata that refers to an E-

500 Olympus Digital Camera with the serial number, A78565021 and a lens serial number of 102157776. Additionally, one of the photos has metadata that it was created on March 25, 2013.

6. On September 12, 2023, the HSI Analyst used facial recognition technology to conduct a search of Victim 1 from the “DAUGHTERABBY” series. Based on the results of the search, the HSI Analyst believed she had identified Victim 1 based on matches to images located on Facebook and Instagram for female presently residing in Montana. The Analyst forwarded the search results to the HSI Great Falls, MT office for further investigation so a positive identification of Victim 1 could be made. On September 21, 2023, pursuant to the information provided, law enforcement in Montana was able to positively identify and interview Victim 1. Identification was based on facial features and on statements from the Victim 1, who was born in July 1999 and is now 24 years old.

7. On September 21, 2023, detectives with the Great Falls Police Department (GFPD) interviewed Victim 1. The interview was recorded and transcribed. During the interview, Victim 1 stated she presently resided in Great Falls, Montana, but was born in Buffalo, New York. At the beginning of the interview, the detectives explained to Victim 1 that they were investigating child exploitation offenses, after which Victim 1 became emotional and said she knew what this investigation was regarding. Victim 1 made the following statements, in part, regarding the investigation and the photographs in the child pornography series “DAUGHTERABBY”:

- Now I know what this is about.

- Give me a second.
- We got to slow this down.
- This is hard for me.
- I don't want to see the pictures.

During the interview, detectives showed Victim 1 a picture from the “DAUGHTERABBY” series of the face of the child depicted, and which point Victim 1 became emotional and acknowledged that she was the child in the photographs. Victim 1 identified certain locations where the photographs were taken in and around the residence. Victim 1 made the following statements, in part, regarding the investigation:

- I don't remember a lot.
- I know who was there at the time.
- I know who was behind the camera.
- This is something I've tried to suppress for years.
- I've only thought about this maybe 3 times.
- It bothers me but I don't know exactly what happened.
- I'm in New York in the photos.
- My uncle Matt Steele (SUBJECT PERSON) took the photos.
- He's not my uncle.
- My dad went to school with Matt.
- We aren't related. We just call him that.
- Matt's last name is Steele.
- Matt is probably early 50s today.
- Matt and my dad were really close.

- Matt acted like an Uncle.
- We had sleepovers at Matt's house all the time.
- Matt lived in or near Buffalo.
- I haven't told anyone about this.
- I knew Matt took photographs of me but I didn't know to what extent.
- Matt groomed me.
- I saw all his toys (referring to sexual toys).
- Our relationship was intimate but not too intimate if that make sense.
- Matt and I would kiss.
- It was like puppy love.
- Matt used a camera with different lenses.
- It was black and expensive.
- The brand or model started with an "R" or an "O" (which is consistent with the metadata indicating one of the photos was created with an Olympus camera).
- Matt had a desktop computer.
- Matt would show me the non-sexual photos that he took of me.
- Matt only had one home.
- I rarely talk to Matt.
- I spoke with Matt approximately five months ago.
- It was like he was in love with me.
- I would cry when I would leave Matt's house.
- Matt wanted to buy me a skirt one time and my dad saw the message.

- My dad was pissed. He told Matt to stop talking to me.

At this point in the interview, Victim 1 identified STEELE from his Facebook profile and then made the following statements, in part, regarding the investigation:

- I've never spoken to Matt about this.
- I knew there were photos but I didn't know to this extent.
- I don't have knowledge of a lot of this; I was young.
- I remember Matt kissing me on the lips.
- Matt would make passes.
- He would say you're going to like this when you're older.
- I didn't know he was taking those kind of photographs of me.
- I remember certain toys he would show me (referring to sexual toys).
- He had BDSM rope, bed straps, ball gage, whip, mini skirt, silk rope.
- He tied me up but not in a sexual way.
- He tied me up with white rope.

At this point in the interview, Victim 1 viewed ten photographs of herself and wrote an approximate age on each photograph (ranging from 10-12 years old) and then made the following statements, in part, regarding the investigation:

- It's hard for me to look at the images.
- The pregnant photo bothers me (referring to a photo of MV1 appearing to be pregnant in a white dress).
- He has a huge desktop computer. He has 3 or 4 monitors in his office.
- He has drives that hook up to your laptop.
- Everything we need is in that room.

- He kept the photographs of me on thumb drives.
- We would look at them together.
- These flashbacks are fucking ...
- He would show me pictures of his ex-girlfriend Jessica.
- They were sexually explicit.
- She was pregnant. The baby died.
- She was tied up, naked on the bed.
- There were a few sexually explicit pictures of Matt alone.
- I was probably around 5 or 6 years old.

8. On November 20, 2023, GFPD detectives conducted a follow up interview with Victim 1, during which she made the following statements, in part, regarding the investigation:

- I have conversations and information pertaining to Matt on my phone.
- I talked to Matt when I was in Washington last year.
- Matt sent me money so I could rent a hotel room.
- I stopped seeing Matt when I was eleven.
- I last visited Matt when I was seventeen.
- I've never been to another house or known Matt to own another house.

At this point in the interview, Victim 1 drew a diagram of STEELE's residence and was shown images of the SUBJECT PREMISES from Google, and stated:

- The photos Matt took of me are from the house I drew.
- That's definitely Matt's house! (referring to the Google images).

- 100%
- Matt and I never had sexual intercourse.
- Matt and I kissed.
- I'm not sure if there was touching.
- I think so.
- I don't want to talk about it.
- Matt touched me.
- I got a UTI.
- Matt touched my chest. I was between ages five and eleven.
- I was not an adult.
- Matt tried when I was on the couch.
- I don't remember if he touched my vagina.
- Matt kissed me on the lips all the time.
- My dad would have shot Matt if he knew.
- What Matt did to me has affected my life.

During the interview, Victim 1 allowed the detectives to review screenshots from her cell phone, which revealed the following:

- A Facebook message from STEELE on October 5, 2023, asking "How do I become a part of your life again?"
- A Facebook message received by Victim 1 from STEELE on March 17, 2017 (Victim 1 would have been 17 years old, and STEELE would have been 46 years old), which states: "Hi baby. I miss you. There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about you at Least 20x a day. I love you

more than anything! Come see me soon.”

- A Facebook message received by Victim 1 from STEELE on March 27, 2017, which states: “Will you wear this? Red Velvet EGL Skirt.”
- A Facebook message from Victim 1’s phone to STEELE on March 27, 2017, which was written by Victim 1’s father, which states: “Matt why are you asking a 17 year old girl to dress for you?”

9. The following is a description of four of the images contained in the child pornography series “DAUGHTERABBY”:


- a. Photograph #1: Title – “Daughter Abby 12Yo Naked Shower Budding Puffy Small Tits Pthc” – the photograph depicts Victim 1 when she was 12 years old posing naked in the shower. In my training and experience, this image constitutes child pornography.
- b. Photograph #2: Title – “My Slaves (Neighbors) Pedo Fkk Incest Lolita Bondage Pthc Kdy 001 11Yo Daughter Abby” – the photograph depicts Victim 1 when she was approximately 11 years old topless with pink underwear on with her hands and feet tied up with white rope.
- c. Photograph #3: Title – “Daughter Abby 11Yo Budding Small Tits Sweet Ass Up Sleeping Naked Fuck Toy Pthc” – the photograph depicts Victim 1 when she was approximately 11 years old lying naked face down on a couch with her buttocks exposed.
- d. Photograph #4: Title – “!!New Pthc!! Pregnant Little Girl Lsm Ptsc Babyshivid Lolita Nymphet Hussyfan Paradise” – the photograph depicts Victim 1 when she was approximately 11 years old fully clothed and wearing a white dress with what appears to be a pregnant belly.

10. On March 11, 2024, HSI agents executed a federally authorized search warrant at the residence of STEELE located in Elma, New York. During the search warrant, STEELE was present, and agents attempted to interview him. STEELE requested an attorney

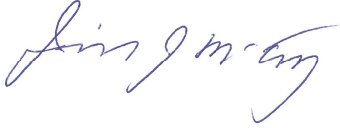
be present during the interview, but he stated he was open to have an explanation of what was happening. After agents explained the nature of the investigation and the circumstances surrounding the search warrant, to include details concerning the Victim 1, STEELE made the following spontaneous utterances: “How is she doing?” and “I feel like crying.”

11. During the execution of the search warrant agents made observations regarding the layout and the décor of STEELE’s residence. Agents noted that throughout the residence, several photographs of Victim 1 as a child were found both framed and unframed in several rooms. These photographs were found in the kitchen, the office, and the living room. More specifically, the bathroom shower décor matches the décor and background that is seen in at least one of the photographs of Victim 1 from the series “DAUGHTERABBY”. Agents also observed that the tan colored couch and the kitchen cabinetry and back splash also match several of the photograph backgrounds from the series “DAUGHTERABBY”. Furthermore, agents located an Olympus telephoto camera lens bearing the serial number 10215776. This particular lens has the same serial number as the lens found in the metadata of several of the “DAUGHTERABBY” photographs, and based on my investigation, I have learned that Olympus lens’ are manufactured in Japan.

12. Based upon the foregoing, I respectfully submit that I have probable cause to believe that **MATTHEW A. STEELE** has violated Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2251(a) and 2252A(a)(2)(A).


William J. Aiello, Special Agent
Homeland Security Investigations

Sworn and subscribed telephonically
this 11th day of March 2024.



HON. JEREMIAH J. MCCARTHY
United States Magistrate Judge